

Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

GUIDELINES FOR SETTING A FINAL ORAL Ph.D. EXAMINATION

1. The Final PhD Oral Exam (FOE) is conducted by the School of Graduate Studies. A written thesis following SGS guidelines (see link below) must be prepared by the student. One copy for the external examiner must be submitted to the EEB Graduate Office **at least 6 weeks** before the examination date. At the same time thesis copies, along with the exam date, should be distributed to the remaining examination committee members (see committee composition below). Students are encouraged/required to submit their final thesis in digital format through the School of Graduate Studies Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (see the EEB Grad Handbook for details).
2. The thesis must be approved for examination by the supervisor (and co-supervisor if relevant) and one member of the advisory committee, all of who must sign the “Approval of PhD Thesis for Final Oral Examination” form on the EEB website.
3. The examining committee consists of 4 – 6 voting members. Voting members must be members of U. of T’s graduate faculty or be approved in advance by SGS (e.g. the external examiner). SGS and EEB strongly advise at least 5 members in case someone cannot attend at the last minute (a quorum is 4 voting members). Voting members include the supervisor (and co-supervisor if relevant), an external examiner, additional members of the supervisory committee (no more than 3 in total including the supervisor and co-supervisor), and one or two (two are recommended) members from EEB or a related graduate department at the University who **have not** been closely involved in supervision of the thesis. *See the EEB Graduate Handbook for details on the two recommended models for exam committees.* A non-voting exam chair is chosen by SGS. Up to two additional non-voting members may also be included. The external examiner typically attends the examination in person or by audio connection.
4. The supervisor and student should discuss potential external examiners and other committee members. The supervisor nominates a potential external examiner using the appropriate form from the EEB web page and should submit this to the graduate office **at least 8 weeks** before the examination date.
5. The Approval of Thesis form, PhD Final Oral Examination Booking Information Sheet (including the suggestions for exam committee members and the date of the exam), a current student CV including publications and presentations, and a one-page, double-spaced abstract with thesis title should be submitted to the graduate office **at least 7 weeks** prior to the exam date.
6. The exam committee members, including the external examiner, must be approved by both the EEB Graduate Office and SGS.
7. The external examiner is required to submit a written assessment of the thesis to EEB **at least 2 weeks** before the examination. The appraisal consists of a constructively critical, analytical comment on the thesis, and an indication of the importance of the research in relation to its field. EEB will distribute the appraisal to the examination committee and the doctoral candidate two weeks before the examination.
8. The FOE can be held at any campus—the paperwork can all be done electronically now. If it is held at SGS (which is convenient for several reasons), the EEB Graduate Office will book a room with them.

9. Traditionally, students begin the FOE with an oral presentation about their thesis. Then they answer questions about their research and related general knowledge for approximately two hours. Recently, we have recognized that there can be some flexibility about the presentation. According to SGS regulations, at the beginning of the FOE "*The candidate is ... invited to summarize the research and conclusions of the thesis orally, in no more than twenty minutes.*" This statement makes clear that the oral presentation is a choice, not a requirement. Given that the exit seminar required for EEB students covers this same ground, candidates may elect to arrange that the voting members of the examining committee attend the exit seminar as a replacement for the traditional oral presentation at the beginning of the formally scheduled FOE. The key complication of this arrangement is being able to ensure that the external examiner can attend. The FOE booking sheet allows students to make this substitution, and requests the date and time of the exit seminar, so that SGS can notify the FOE chair about the arrangement and give them the option of attending the seminar (The chair's attendance at the oral presentation is not a requirement).
10. SGS now allows up to two members of the examining committee to attend the exam remotely (teleconferencing, Skype, etc.), but in case the Skype quality is poor we recommend that a conference phone is available. Please ensure that all participants (including Lisa Fannin at SGS) have exchanged telephone numbers (preferably a landline number), Skype addresses, etc. well in advance of the defense.

EXTERNAL EXAMINER and COPIES OF THE THESIS

An external examiner reads and evaluates your thesis and provides SGS with his/her written appraisal of the thesis. The appraisal will be discussed among committee members at the examination. The external examiner will receive a small honorarium for their service. Travel expenses up to \$500 will be reimbursed by SGS and those remaining are the responsibility of the supervisor.

Thesis copy required: the EEB Graduate Office must send the thesis to the external examiner, with the required paper work. The student is responsible for providing this hardcopy to the EEB Graduate Office.

The student is responsible for providing each voting member of the examining committee, except the Chair (provided by SGS), with a copy of the thesis (hardcopy or e-version, as requested by the examiner).

Oct. 7, 2017